MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

June 2001

for
Strathcona Park

BRITISH COLUMBIA

104-03173/

Strathcona Park

MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

BC Parks
Strathcona District

National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data
BC Parks. Strathcona District.
Strathcona Park master plan amendment.

"June 2001"
Also available on the Internet.
ISBN 0-7726-4730-5

1. Strathcona Park (B.C.) 2. Provincial parks and reserves - British Columbia - Planning. 3. Provincial parks and reserves - British Columbia - Management.
4. Ecosystem management - British Columbia - Strathcona Park.
I. British Columbia. Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. II. Title.

FC3815.S87B32 2002 333.78'3'097112 C2002-960053-7
F1089.S87B32 2002

Strathcona Park

MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

June 2001

Approved by:

Ron Lampard
District Manager

Date: 01/05/2002

Joyce Murray
Minister

Date: Sept 11, 2003

Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Key Changes since 1993 1
Purpose of Amendment 1
Review Process 2
Year 2000 Amendment 2
3a. Strathcona Park Vision Statement for the 21st Century 4
3. Role of Park (pp. 7 - 10 of 1993 Strathcona Park Master Plan) 5
3.2 Conservation Role (p. 7, 11 of 1993 Strathcona Park Master Plan) 5
Nature Conservancy 5
4. Park Zoning (pp. 10 – 13) 6
McBride Creek Addition 6
Megin River and Talbot Creek Addition 7
Divers/Rossiter Lake Addition 8
Moyeha Special Feature Zone 8
Wilderness Recreation Zones 9
4b. Relationships with First Nations (new section) 11
5.1 Land 12
Public Consultation 12
5.1.1 Park Boundary (p. 15) 13
5.1.2 Inholdings and Other Tenures (pp. 22-23) 14
Mining Infrastructure 14
5.2 Water (p. 23) 16
Industrial Structures 16
5.3 Vegetation (pp. 25-26) 18
Campfires 18
5.4 Wildlife (pp. 27-28) 19
Research 19
Long-term Protection of Sensitive Species 20
Hunting and Trapping 21
5.6 Cultural Resources (p. 30) 23
6. Visitors Services 24
6.2 Access Strategy (p. 36) 24
Road and Trail Access 24
Air Access 25
6.3 Information Strategy (p. 37) 27
6.5 Management Services (pp. 39 – 40) 29
Volunteers 29
6.6 Outdoor Recreation Opportunities (p. 40) 31
6.6.2 Boating (p. 41) 32
6.6.3 Frontcountry Camping (p. 41) 32

6.6.4 Backcountry Hiking (pp. 42-44) 33
6.6.6 Horse Use (p. 45) 35
6.6.7 Mountain Biking (p. 46) 36
6.6.8 Winter Recreation (p. 47) 37
6.6.12 Day Use Opportunities (p. 50) 39
6.6.13 Sport Climbing (new section) 40

List of Plates:

Plate 1: The Golden Hinde 3
Plate 2: Fossils in the Wilderness Conservation Zone 10
Plate 3: White tailed Ptarmigan 15
Plate 4: The Red Pillar 17
Plate 5: Interpretation in the backcountry 18
Plate 6: Collared elk at Crest Creek 22
Plate 7: First Nation dancer 23
Plate 8: Elk Portal entrance to Strathcona Park 26
Plate 9: Della Falls 28
Plate 10: Canoeing on Buttle Lake 30
Plate 11: Backcountry skiing on Forbidden Plateau 38
Plate 12: Mountaineering near Red Pillar 41

Introduction

Strathcona Provincial Park is British Columbia's oldest park and is considered a critical park of Vancouver Island's protected wilderness. The park also has a long management planning history. In the late 1980s, a management planning process was underway but was suspended in response to strong public criticism over the government's decision to delete parts of the park without public input. Consequently, a government-appointed committee composed of public representatives was established. The resulting Strathcona Park Advisory Committee report "Restoring the Balance", also known as the Larkin Report, recommended the establishment of the Strathcona Provincial Park Steering Committee. This committee, composed of three public advisory members and three staff members from BC Parks, developed the current master plan that was approved in March 1993. It was recommended that this plan be reviewed in five years.

The 1993 master plan also recommended that a public advisory group be established to assist in the implementation of the goals and objectives set out in the document. In response, the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee (SPPAC) was established and is composed of members of the public and BC Parks staff.

Key Changes since 1993

Since the approval of the master plan, 13% of Vancouver Island's natural and cultural features has been protected. The Clayoquot Land Use Decision recommended the protection of the Megin Talbot watershed (21,300 ha), which was added to Strathcona Park. The Vancouver Island Land Use Plan led to: the addition of the McBride Creek area (3,750 ha); negotiations to acquire Divers Lake (1,034 ha); and protection of the White Ridge area as a separate but adjacent park.

The Interim Measures Agreement signed by the provincial government and the Nuu-chah-nulth people in 1996 provides for a government-to-government relationship to deal with resource management and land use planning in Clayoquot Sound. The resulting Central Region Board also provides advice in the planning and management for those portions of Strathcona Park in Clayoquot Sound.

In January of 2000, Clayoquot Sound was designated as a Biosphere Reserve under the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program. Three watersheds in Strathcona Park are included, Megin -Talbot, Bedwell and Moyeha. As a Biosphere Reserve, Clayoquot Sound is internationally recognized for its temperate rainforests and coastal ecosystems. The program attempts to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with the sustainable use of natural resources for the benefit of local people. The parks are the core area of the reserve and central to the program by providing long term protection of the ecosystems and opportunities for environmental education, training, research and monitoring.

Purpose of Amendment

Overall the Strathcona Park Master Plan is a strong document. It sets Strathcona Park's role as a large wilderness area and its significant contribution to the representation of natural ecosystems and the protection of special features and recreation opportunities.

The plan establishes a public advisory committee to provide advice in the implementation of the plan. The plan also gives sound direction on: park additions; management of vegetation, fish, wildlife and cultural values; recreation activities such as appropriate uses, aircraft landings, motor boat use, camping; and access.

As the plan has been implemented, a number of areas have been identified as needing clarification including: zoning; relationship with First Nations; acquisitions; uses under permit; management of natural values; role of visitor education and information; recreation activities and management; management of new activities such as rock climbing. In addition, there is a need to add direction in the plan regarding First Nations, Sport Climbing and Snowmobiling. Finally, a vision statement has been added to synthesize the park's role and contribution to the Protected Areas System of British Columbia.

Review Process

A two- phase review process was designed to identify issues of concern to the public, and to present and received feedback on the amended or revised direction provided in the original master plan. In the fall of 1998, BC Parks in conjunction with the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee (SPPAC) initiated a review of the 1993 Strathcona Park Master Plan. A newsletter was sent to the mailing list for Strathcona Park to inform people of the review process and solicit issues and concerns. Approximately 300 newsletters were distributed.

In the Spring of 1999, workshops were held in Victoria, Tofino, Port Alberni, Courtenay, Campbell River, and Gold River. The workshops focused on reconfirming the vision for Strathcona Park, gathering issues and identifying possible solutions. From this information, BC Parks and SPPAC drafted an issue analysis paper that collated the vision statements, addressed the issues that were raised and made proposals to address the issues. In the Winter of 2000, BC Parks and SPPAC held open houses and public meetings in the six communities to seek feedback on the proposals. Over 150 people attended and 38 written submissions were received. These comments and opinions were utilized to finalize the amendment to the plan.

Year 2000 Amendment

As a result of the review, the public continues to support maintaining the integrity of the Wilderness Conservation Zone, which accounts for 75% of the park. As a result, the amendment continues to maximize the strongest zoning, Wilderness Conservation, to maintain the remote undisturbed nature of much of the park. The Wilderness Recreation Zone, where facilities such as trails and pit toilets can be built to reduce user and environmental impacts, is also minimized. To maintain the park values in the Wilderness Conservation Zone and limit environmental impacts, the amendment directs BC Parks to address the levels of use and access in those areas and monitor impacts. This amendment provides the direction to monitor and address recreational activity and access in the Wilderness Conservation Zone.

In summary, the master plan and this Amendment will continue to guide park management now and into the future. Review of the plan may occur in response to specific issues that were not foreseen by the plan and require greater public review.

This master plan amendment identifies new, revised or additional directions from the existing plan, or confirms directions given in the plan. It is to be used in conjunction with the master plan and is organized to follow the format of the existing plan. Page numbers are noted to provide a reference to the existing master plan. A revised map of the zoning has been included to reflect changes and revisions in the zoning (Map 1).

Under current BC Parks policy, plans of this nature are typically called management plans. However, for the sake of consistency with the previous planning process, this plan will continue to be called the Strathcona Park Master Plan.

It is important to point out that this revision applies only to Strathcona Park, not Strathcona Westmin Park that was developed in 1995. Strathcona Westmin Provincial Park is managed under a separate master plan. These two plans complement each other.

The implementation of the Amendment of the 1993 Strathcona Park Master Plan will occur over the next decade. Fiscal, staff, and operational constraints facing BC Parks will dictate that actions be phased in over a number of years.

Plate 1: The Golden Hinde

3a. Strathcona Park Vision Statement for the 21st Century

The vision statement looks forward to describe the character and management of Strathcona Park in the future. A strong long-term vision helps to guide short-term management actions and assists in reacting to changing demands. It also allows BC Parks to incorporate new approaches to conservation management. Through this 'bigger picture', the vision provides a context in which to guide park management in both the short and long-term timeframes. The vision statement below represents a compilation of the statements developed by the public at the workshops.

Strathcona Park is the wilderness heart of Vancouver Island. It is part of a system of connected natural areas that conserves the biodiversity of the island and protects ecosystems which are representative of the natural environment of British Columbia. Strathcona Park also provides and protects outstanding wilderness recreation opportunities and plays a significant role in the protection and recovery of rare and endangered species. Its ecological integrity is being preserved, and in some cases, has been restored.

Recreational opportunities are provided without compromising the conservation values and objectives of the park. The core of the park remains a remote natural area and supports low levels of non-motorized sustainable recreation opportunities. In the backcountry areas, recreational facilities have been developed or upgraded to limit impact. In some locations, users are restricted to maintain the wilderness experience. In the more intensively used frontcountry areas, developed facilities accommodate and encourage a diverse range and larger numbers of park visitors, while minimizing impact on natural values.

Lands adjacent to the park are managed for industrial and other uses but in a manner that is sensitive to the park values and visitors. Impacts on adjacent park forests, wildlife habitat and the visual experience by visitors in the park are fully considered by land managers and timber companies. Industrial activities along park boundaries are controlled to ensure protection of the backcountry areas. Changes to the park's boundary have been made to improve the park's ecological integrity and provide more ecologically based boundaries. Within the park, non-conforming uses have been, and are continuing to be, reduced. Those remaining are managed to ensure as natural conditions as possible.

As part of the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Strathcona Park has an international profile for research and education. It provides opportunities for research, interpretation, and education.

The people of BC are involved in the planning and management of the Strathcona Park. BC Parks is working with First Nations for the mutual benefit of the park and the First Nations. Volunteers are welcomed and integrated into park management. The Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee provides advice in the implementation of the master plan and in responsible management of the park. For matters of local interest, additional comment is sought from the public that has been kept well informed of park planning and management. The management of the park integrates the vision and passion of the diverse surrounding communities and the general public of British Columbia.

3. Role of Park (pp. 7 - 10 of 1993 Strathcona Park Master Plan)

3.2 Conservation Role (p. 7, 11 of 1993 Strathcona Park Master Plan)

Nature Conservancy

The *Park Act* has the provision to establish Nature Conservancy Areas (NCA) under Order-in-Council. NCAs are roadless, wilderness areas retained in a natural condition for the preservation of their natural features and ecological systems. All forms of commercial activity and motorized access, resource use and hunting are prohibited. Use of these areas is limited to activities which do not detract from, or disturb, the natural environment and which are compatible with the wilderness experience. Use quotas can be established if the popularity of an activity reaches a point where the impact of participation in the activity is considered detrimental to the natural processes of the area. Any improvement or development will be limited to that which is required to protect the natural environment and to ensure the safety of the visitor. Vegetation and wildlife management and protection measure will be implemented only when it is necessary to correct or control unnatural situations induced by human activities.

The master plan recommended changes to the NCAs but these have not occurred due to the large numbers of new protected areas being designated.

Direction in the Master Plan

- Pursue an Order in Council to describe Nature Conservancy Areas status for all of Strathcona Park except the Intensive Recreation Zone, the Wilderness Recreation Zone at Donner Lake and the mineral claims for which legal status has yet to be determined.
- Prohibit fishing within the NCA.

Revised Direction

- **Establish the larger Nature Conservancy Areas or equivalent protection, as directed in the 1990 master plan.**
- **Prohibit fishing in the Wilderness Conservation Zone.**

Rationale

- Nature Conservancy Areas are an effective means to ensure protection of wilderness values.
- The intent is to use available mechanisms to ensure protection of wilderness values and maintain the integrity of the park in a roadless, remote condition.

4. Park Zoning (pp. 10 – 13)

BC Parks uses zoning to assist in the planning and management of provincial parks much like zoning is used to divide municipalities into residential, commercial and industrial areas. The zones reflect the intended land use, the degree of human use, the level of management and the development required. In the master plan, 75% of Strathcona Park is zoned as Wilderness Conservation. This serves to: maximize the wilderness values; protect a remote, unmodified natural landscape; and provide unassisted backcountry recreation opportunities dependent on a wild and remote area. Another 5% is zoned as Wilderness Recreation, which cover the trail corridors and provide for assisted hiking and facilities such as trails, toilets and campsites.

In managing the park according to the master plan, BC Parks staff and the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee (SPPAC) found that the mapping of the Wilderness Recreation Zone was not exact and has precluded the development of the support facilities that are indicated in the master plan. Human impact in the Wilderness Conservation Zone has increased as a result of visitors utilizing the Wilderness Recreation zones and entering the Wilderness Conservation zones where facilities cannot be provided.

In 1995, the Megin River and Talbot Creek watersheds were added to Strathcona Park as a result of the Clayoquot Land Use Decision. As recommended in the Vancouver Island Land Use Plan, a portion of the McBride Creek watershed was also added to Strathcona Park and Divers/Rossiter lakes area is being acquired. Negotiations are almost complete.

A new zoning map (Map 1) has been prepared to replace Figure 4 Zoning Map from the 1993 master plan. It incorporated the changes set out below. It also highlights the park's special features, as the previous map did.

Direction in the Master Plan	Much of Strathcona Park has been zoned as Wilderness Conservation to protect the remote, undisturbed natural landscape and provide for unassisted backcountry recreation experience (pp. 10-13).

McBride Creek Addition

This area was added to create a more effective park boundary by including a low-elevation lake, a meandering valley bottom stream and adjacent alpine ridges. A trail within this area provides access from Great Central Lake to Della Falls.

New Direction	➢ **Zone marine waters and foreshore as Natural Environment.** ➢ **Zone the Della Falls trail as Wilderness Recreation; zone the terrestrial portion of McBride Creek addition Wilderness Conservation (Map 1).**
Public Feedback	Many participants support maximizing the Wilderness Conservation Zone and oppose a larger Wilderness Recreation Zone that would allow hunting.
Rationale	• The addition creates a more effective park boundary by including a low-elevation lake and valley-bottom, as well as alpine ridges. • The Natural Environment Zone provides for the use of motorized boats

on Great Central Lake; only a small portion of the lake has been added to the park. It also allows for camping along the lakeshore.

- The Wilderness Recreation zoning recognizes the trail from Great Central Lake to Della Falls.
- The Wilderness Conservation zoning is consistent with the zoning for the rest of McBride watershed and rest of the park.
- These zones satisfy the master plan vision to maximize the wilderness and ecological integrity, while offering sustainable backcountry recreation opportunities.

Megin River and Talbot Creek Addition

The addition of the Megin Talbot area increases the number of coastal watersheds protected from tidal waters to mountaintop. It protects some outstanding conservation values and assists in conserving more of the biodiversity of the protected areas on Vancouver Island. Much of the area is inaccessible, although many people access Megin Lake by floatplane.

New Direction

- **Zone the area including Megin Lake, Megin River and the surrounding area as Wilderness Recreation (as shown on Map 1).**
- **Zone Talbot River and the upper portions of the Megin drainage as Wilderness Conservation (Map 1).**
- **Zone marine waters as Natural Environment (Map 1).**

Public Feedback

Many participants in the review process wanted to maximize the Wilderness Conservation Zone in order to protect the wilderness values of the park. Some opposed the Wilderness Recreation Zone, objecting to aircraft access and hunting. Others supported those two activities.

Rationale

- The Wilderness Conservation Zone recognizes the outstanding conservation and biodiversity values of this addition and the inaccessibility of the upper end of the watersheds.
- The Wilderness Conservation zoning complements the adjacent zoning of Wilderness Conservation and Special Feature (which acknowledges the unique wilderness values of Moyeha watershed).
- The Wilderness Recreation Zone recognizes the recreational features and use of these areas. It allows the existing air access to continue, which increases the recreation and economic opportunities on the west side of the park and assists local communities.
- The Wilderness Recreation zoning is consistent with government policy in newly created protected areas to recognize and permit existing uses that are compatible with park values.
- The Natural Environment Zone provides for the use of motorized boats that would reach the park from Shelter Inlet.
- The direction is in keeping with the vision statement to protect natural values, ecological integrity, and undisturbed wilderness but also to provide recreational opportunities.

Divers/Rossiter Lake Addition

This addition, adjacent to Forbidden Plateau, was identified in the Vancouver Island Land Use Plan. Negotiations are currently underway for its acquisition. It provides a more appropriate boundary for the Forbidden Plateau area based on natural features and protects the park from the effects of industrial uses outside the park boundary. It provides representation of the Mountain Hemlock Moist Maritime (MHmm1) biogeoclimatic variant. At least one uncommon plant, bastard toadflax, has been found here. This area also protects the headwaters of the Oyster River, an important salmon and steelhead stream. The Divers/Rossiter addition could support recreational uses such as hiking, canoeing and fishing.

New Direction

- **Zone the Divers/Rossiter addition as Natural Environment (Map 1).**

Public Feedback

Some people commented that they would like to see the Wilderness Conservation Zoning for maximum protection of park values. Others wanted other recreational activities allowed here, including snowmobiling.

Rationale

- The addition provides a boundary based on natural features.
- The zoning acknowledges the existing recreational (hiking, canoeing, fishing) and natural values and is consistent with the adjacent existing zoning.
- Zoning is in keeping with the vision statement to keep the park natural and to offer non-motorized recreational opportunities.

Moyeha Special Feature Zone

The Moyeha is one of the few watersheds on the west coast of Vancouver Island that is protected from mountaintop to tide water. The Special Feature Zone serves to highlight the high preservation and conservation values of this undeveloped and remote watershed. As such, the intention of this zoning is to manage the area more conservatively than even a Wilderness Conservation Zone.

Confirmed Direction

- **Retain Special Feature Zoning of the Moyeha watershed (Map 1), and manage the area as an undeveloped, remote wilderness area.**
- **Modify the western boundary of the zone to follow the watershed divide.**

Public Feedback

Many participants highly value the wilderness characteristics of the Moyeha and felt that the zoning that highlights this as an undeveloped and remote area should be maintained.

Rationale

- Highlighting this area as a special feature is in keeping with the vision statement to maintain the wilderness values.
- This zoning complements the direction of the current master plan.
- The intent of the zoning is to manage the area more conservatively than Wilderness Conservation Zone to ensure the protection and preservation of an intact wilderness watershed.

Wilderness Recreation Zones

The Wilderness Recreation zones are not accurately mapped which has precluded BC Parks from taking management action to address environmental impacts. Fox example, trails in the Marble Meadows area were located outside the Wilderness Recreation Zone in the 1993 plan. This prevented BC Parks from implementing measures to reroute or modify trails as facilities cannot be built in the Wilderness Conservation Zone.

Revised Direction

➢ **Refine the Wilderness Recreation Zone mapping. With the exception of the Bedwell River Trail (see Direction below), expand the zone to 100 m on either side of the trail with nodes to allow for primitive camping and supporting facilities (Map 1).**

Public Feedback

Many people felt that this zone should be minimized to maximize the Wilderness Conservation Zone in the park. Development nodes would provide opportunities to manage recreational use and provide facilities where needed.

Rationale

- Refining the boundaries of the Wilderness Recreation zones allows BC Parks to better management the impacts of recreation use in wilderness areas. This would provide for a better recreation experience and maintain the integrity of the natural environment.
- This document continues the direction of the current master plan.
- Refining the Wilderness Recreation zoning is in keeping with the vision statement to maintain the wilderness values and manage the impact of visitors.

Revised Direction

➢ **Refine the Wilderness Recreation Zone along the Bedwell River Trail (south of Bedwell Lake to the park boundary) to the valley bottom (Map 1).**

Public Feedback

Although some people wanted the Wilderness Recreation zones as small as possible, other people indicated that this would be difficult in the Bedwell valley, as major trail relocations may be required.

Rationale

- Major portions of the lower Bedwell River Trail require rerouting for a safer and environmentally responsible trail that avoids conflicts with elk habitat. A wider Wilderness Recreation Zone would allow for this.
- Refining the zoning on the Bedwell Trail is in keeping with the vision statement to provide wilderness recreation opportunities.

Revised Direction

➢ **Relocate Wilderness Recreation zones on the southeast boundary to include Century Sam Lake Trail and the Comox Glacier access (Map 1).**

Public Feedback

Generally participants supported maximizing the Wilderness Conservation Zone and minimizing the Wilderness Recreation Zone.

Rationale

- A change in the location of the zone would better indicate the location of the trails in current use.
- Relocating the Wilderness Recreation zones is in keeping with the vision statement to maintain the wilderness values and manage the impact from visitors.

Revised Direction

➢ **Delete the Wilderness Recreation Zone that indicates a proposed trail from Margaret Lake to Oshinow Lake, from Margaret Creek to Della Falls and from Oshinow Lake to Della Falls. Rezone as Wilderness Conservation.**

Public Feedback

Most people are not familiar with this part of the park. Although there was some support for the trail, some were concerned about penetrating the park with more trails, and therefore having a greater impact of the park and its values.

Rationale

- The topography currently highlighted is not suitable for trail development. Such a trail would have significant impacts on the environment and be expensive to maintain.
- Development of the trail would create increased recreation pressures on the park in an area that is currently undeveloped.
- A better route to the Della Falls trail can be accessed from outside the park and would provide an overland route from near Oshinow Lake to the Della Falls trail.
- Rezoning this area as Wilderness Conservation in keeping with the vision statement to maintain the wilderness values and manage the impact of visitors.

Plate 2: Fossils in the Wilderness Conservation Zone

4b. Relationships with First Nations (new section)

The traditional territories of at least six First Nations overlap with the Strathcona Park boundaries, Ahousaht, Comox, Hupacasath, Mowachaht/Muchalaht, We Wai kai (Cape Mudge), We Wai kum (Campbell River). Under law, they have the right to practice traditional activities and to gather food for sustenance. These activities include, but are not limited to, hunting, fishing, trapping and food gathering. A number of First Nations continue to exercise these rights. As directed by the court decisions, BC Parks must recognize this and work with First Nations to ensure that these rights are honoured but park's values are not threatened.

Many of these nations are in treaty negotiations. In 1996, the Government of BC and the hereditary chiefs of the Nuu-chah-nulth Central Region Tribes, including the Ahousaht and Hupacasath, signed an Interim Measures Agreement. Through this agreement, the Clayoquot Sound Central Region Board was established. The Central Region Board is a joint management structure between First Nations and the provincial government, which provides the opportunities for input into resource management, land use planning, economic development and social issues.

Direction in the Master Plan

Establish direct contact and consultation with local aboriginal people to determine the significance of cultural values and to develop appropriate management, information, and education strategies (p. 30).

New Direction

➢ **Develop working relationships with the First Nations and the Clayoquot Sound Central Region Board to avoid infringement of First Nation rights and to manage park values.**

Public Feedback

The First Nations need to be involved in both the planning and the management of Strathcona Park. The Clayoquot Sound Central Region Board supports this direction.

Rationale

- A number of First Nations continue to exercise their right to undertake traditional activities and harvest traditional resources for ceremonial or sustenance purposes. As directed by court decisions, BC Parks must recognize this and that the park's values are not threatened.
- Developing a relationship with First Nations is in keeping with the vision statement to work with the First Nations for the mutual benefit of both the park and the First Nations.

5.1 Land

Public Consultation

Given the history of Strathcona Park and the large numbers of non-conforming uses in the park, the public continues to be concerned about land uses in Strathcona Park. Since the approval of the master plan, BC Parks has been working with the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee (SPPAC) to provide advice on the park management. Recently, BC Parks has been under criticism for not including the general public in deciding on a course of action regarding land tenure.

Direction in the Master Plan

- Establish a Strathcona Park public advisory committee and liaise with hiking and other groups to ensure that park management concerns benefit from the greatest possible input (p. 39).
- Review, in public forum, any proposal for a park use permit that involves land tenure (p. 15).

Additional Direction

- **Refer permit applications on land tenure to SPPAC for advice on management and direction for public consultation.**
- **Advertise intent, and based on public response, hold public meetings to further discuss the issue if required.**
- **Ensure broad formal public consultation with issues that deviate from the master plan including, but not limited to, park use permits that involve land tenure, and issues of local impact.**
- **Review gathered information with SPPAC for further advice.**

Public Feedback

People expressed concern about the public involvement and consultation about some management actions that were taken. They wanted assurance that they would be consulted in a fair manner. Some called for local input on the development of facilities. Others stated support for the role of SPPAC. At the open houses and public meetings, people were comfortable with this direction.

Rationale

- Additional direction provides clarification of public involvement to ensure that park management is consistent with societal preferences.
- This additional direction establishes clearer guidelines for public involvement, which are in keeping with the current plan direction and are consistent with the vision statement.

5.1.1 Park Boundary (p. 15)

Given the straight-line boundaries of the park that cut across topographic and ecological features, people have been concerned about the uses adjacent to the park and their implications for park values and park visitors. Along Highway 28 in particular, land uses such as logging can have a significant impact on the visitor's experience. Since straight lines define the park boundary, the public finds it difficult to determine what land is in the park and what is not.

Since the master plan was approved in 1993, the provincial government announced that it would protect 12% of the province's natural environment through the Protected Areas Strategy. The Vancouver Island Land Use Plan called for the protection of 13% of Vancouver Island and set acquisition priorities to protect areas that are privately held. The Divers/Rossiter lakes area is one of the recommended areas for acquisition.

Of the list of 20 areas recommended for acquisition in the 1993 master plan, the lower Drinkwater valley, and McBride Creek have been secured. In addition, the Megin and White Ridge study areas have been protected in Strathcona Park and White Ridge Park, respectively. Divers Lake is in the process of being acquired.

The private lands around the Buttle Lake campground is not mentioned in the list of acquisition priorities although the road to the campground and the day use area are in trespass on Timberwest's land. Negotiations are underway to rectify that situation.

Logging is now occurring on some of the privately held lands that abut the park, such as Mount Adrian and Elk Mountain.

The most sensitive areas have been recommended for acquisition. However, at this time, government does not have the funds to acquire these private lands, which will be harvested.

Direction in the Master Plan

Private landowners would be encouraged to participate in joint management strategies to protect park values, such as visual and recreation values, and wildlife habitat, and to minimize the impact of activities particularly where scenic values are considered important (pp. 16, 31).

Additional Direction

- **Retain the list of acquisitions in the current plan and work with public groups to encourage fund raising to acquire properties.**

Public Feedback

Many people expressed concern about the harvesting adjacent to the park and the impact on aesthetics, tourism, recreational experience and the conservation effectiveness of the park. They wanted to see land acquired to ensure protection of park values, special features and values currently outside the park. They support maintaining an interest in adjacent lands and understand the present fiscal limitations of government.

Rationale

- Given limited budgets, acquisition of the identified properties is not likely at this time without alternative funding.
- The acquisition of the identified properties in the original master plan would assist in protecting the biodiversity and recreation opportunities on Vancouver Island.

Additional Direction

- **Continue to follow the master plan direction to work with other agencies and private landholders to minimize the impact of activities, and address windthrow, hydrology, access, visual quality, and other factors affecting the park.**
- **Request legal surveys for activities taking place adjacent to the park boundaries.**

Public Feedback

Many participants called for stronger measures that would protect park values. There was agreement that legal surveys are important as a means of preventing trespasses into the park.

Rationale

- Working with the park's neighbours will assist in addressing concerns over straight-line boundaries that cut across topographic and ecological features.
- There is a limit on how much government can influence the management and development of private land. For example, buffers adjacent to the park are not supported by current legislation or policy.
- Legal surveys will ensure that trespasses into the park do not occur.
- Working with adjacent land managers is consistent the vision statement to encourage land management adjacent to the park which is sensitive to park values and visitors.

5.1.2 Inholdings and Other Tenures (pp. 22-23)

Mining Infrastructure

As a result of the mining history of the park, a number of adits, shafts and other facilities have been found throughout the southern half of the park. Although these structures are part of the history of the park, some pose a potential safety hazard or may be a potential source of contamination.

Direction in the Master Plan

The master plan is silent on reclamation of adits, shafts and facilities.

Additional Direction

- **Ensure that dangerous openings, structures and facilities left by the mining industry are reclaimed. Sites include, but are not limited to, the Musketeer and Cream Silver claims.**
- **Allow features of Strathcona's mining and exploration history to remain *in situ*, as long as environmental and safety hazards do not exist.**
- **Work with the BC Ministry of Energy and Mines to ensure mitigation where acid rock drainage problems result from mining activities.**

Public Feedback

Most people supported mitigating the impacts of the mining industry by securing or removing the structures and garbage; however, BC Parks

should not be responsible for restoring the sites. Others were concerned about maintaining historical features of mineral exploration.

Rationale

- Reclaiming openings, structure and facilities addresses safety concerns and mitigates environmental impacts, while maintaining the history of the park.
- Mitigation to address acid rock drainage will improve downstream water quality and assist in maintaining fishery values.
- Addressing hazards from the mining industry is in keeping with the vision to mitigate the impact of non-conforming uses.
- Leaving features that do not pose an environmental or safety hazard assists in preserving mining artifacts for the discovery and enjoyment of the park visitor.

Plate 3: White tailed Ptarmigan

5.2 Water (p. 23)

Industrial Structures

Buttle Lake is part of the Upper Campbell Reservoir system that has been artificially regulated since 1957 with the construction of Strathcona Dam. It has an annual fluctuation between 5 to 7 metres and a maximum drawdown as much as 12 metres. Prior to raising the water level in the reservoir, all the timber was cut to the level of the 222.5 metre contour. From the fall to late spring when the water level is low, the stumps and eroding areas are exposed and are visually unattractive. However, the stumps provide habitat for fish.

As part of BC Hydro's hydroelectric generation program, Crest Creek and part of the flow of the Heber River were diverted into the Elk River system, which drains Upper Campbell Lake. The BC Recreational Fisheries Branch has expressed concern about the impacts on spawning fish if the Crest Creek diversion were removed

There are three reservoirs in Strathcona Park that serves the mine in Strathcona Westmin Park. These are at Jim Mitchell, Thelwood, and Tennent lakes.

Direction in the Master Plan

- Eliminate the Heber diversion (p. 23).
- Eliminate and restore the reservoirs that serve the operating mine when they are no longer needed (p. 23).
- Work with BC Hydro to develop a reservoir management plan to address recreational and environmental requirements of the park (p.24).
- The master plan is silent on the Crest Creek diversion. The berming and ditching of Crest Creek is assumed to be part of the Heber River Diversion and therefore elimination of the Heber River Diversion would also include the Crest Creek diversion.

Additional Direction

- **Participate in the BC Hydro's Water Use Planning process to minimize the seasonal water level fluctuations of Buttle and Upper Campbell lakes as part of the Upper Campbell Reservoir system, and stabilize the channels of the Elk River. As part of this direction, require BC Hydro to undertake an assessment of removing the Heber and Crest Diversions.**
- **Initiate a foreshore improvement program to enhance recreational opportunities, aesthetics, fish and waterfowl habitat, and wintering habitat for ungulates. In many areas, this would require complete stump removal and possibly shoreline modifications.**

Public Feedback

The flooding of Buttle Lake continues to be of concern to many park supporters due to the loss of old growth, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and the resulting aesthetics. Some called for the restoration to Buttle Lake to pre-dam conditions. Others are wary of the environmental and downstream impacts of removal of the diversions and suggest that a study is not required. Shoreline improvement programs were requested to address aesthetics.

Rationale

- These directions will help to establish shoreline plant populations and reduce erosion resulting from fluctuations in water levels.
- They address some of the visual impacts during periods of drawdown and provide for the best summer recreation.
- They will create replacement habitat for fish and habitat enhancement for waterfowl and ungulates.
- The undertaking this direction is in keeping with the master plan.

Confirmed Direction

Continue to follow the master plan direction to remove reservoirs for mine operations at Jim Mitchell, Thelwood, and Tennent lakes and restore site when they are no longer needed.

Public Feedback

A few people suggested that the reservoirs be used to provide power to the campgrounds. Other people expressed concerns on the impact of restoring the sites on the shoreline. Most supported removal.

Rationale

- This direction is in keeping with current direction of master plan, but adds more detail to 'eliminate reservoirs' at Jim Mitchell, Thelwood, and Tennent lakes.
- An impact assessment will examine the impacts on the shoreline.
- It will return the park to a more natural state.

Plate 4: The Red Pillar

5.3 Vegetation (pp. 25-26)

Campfires

Campfires in the backcountry can have environmental impacts, particularly in the delicate subalpine environment by damaging the vegetation including trees and moss communities and in many situations standing dead and fallen trees are harvested to provide firewood. Air quality can also be affected. Campfires are part of the Canadian camping experience as people enjoy having a fire at their campsite.

Direction in the Master Plan	Ban campfires in the Forbidden Plateau area and encourage park users to carry campstoves and not make campfires except in emergencies (p. 26).
Additional Direction	➢ **Ban open fires from the park except in areas where facilities are provided for campfires.**
Public Feedback	Some people expressed regret that fires would no longer be allowed in many areas, but appreciated that concern for the impacts of fires.
Rationale	• This direction maintains the natural values and habitat of standing dead and fallen trees in the forest and protects delicate subalpine communities. • Banning campfires is in keeping with the vision statement by maintaining the ecological integrity of the backcountry.

Plate 5: Interpretation in the backcountry

5.4 Wildlife (pp. 27-28)

Research

Protected areas provide natural benchmarks to monitor regional and global environmental changes and to evaluate and improve resource management practices. They are also reservoirs of genetic information. In Strathcona Park, concerns have been raised about encouraging research, particularly in the Wilderness Conservation zones of the park. Research can be disruptive to the wilderness experience when helicopters are used and when research equipment is installed.

The newly designated Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Reserve under the United Nations Environmental, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) covers the Megin Talbot addition, the Moyeha watershed and the Bedwell watershed of Strathcona Park. The purpose of the Biosphere Reserve Program is to explore and demonstrate approaches to conservation and sustainable development on a regional scale.

Direction in the Master Plan

Encourage non-destructive scientific studies to improve the knowledge of the park and those with direct management benefits (pp. 25, 27).

Revised Direction

- **Support and encourage non-destructive research that is consistent with the zoning to improve what is known of the park and/or projects with direct park management benefits.**
- **In conjunction with researchers, develop research guidelines to minimize impacts on the park and the wilderness values, and to facilitate the distribution of research results.**
- **Develop criteria for research in Strathcona Park to clarify what is appropriate.**

Public Feedback

Some people indicated a role for Strathcona Park in research, and felt that it would enhance management and assist in educational programs. Other participants expressed a concern on the impacts of research and the needs for limits and the amount and type of research.

Rationale

- As the land base outside of protected areas is modified, protected areas will become increasing important on a global scale for research on the natural environment.
- Protected areas assist in providing natural benchmarks to monitor regional and global environmental changes and to evaluate and improve resource management practices. They are also reservoirs of genetic information.
- Many of the impacts of research are temporary but, although they can conflict with people's perception of wilderness, much can be gained through a better knowledge of the park, its ecosystems and its wildlife.
- These directions are in keeping with the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere program to demonstrate approaches to conservation and sustainable development on a regional scale.
- These directions will assist in reducing the impacts to park visitors and on park values and add to the knowledge base of the park.

- These directions are in keeping with the vision statement to provide possibilities and opportunities for appropriate research.
- The distribution of research results will increase public access to research undertaken in the park.
- Criteria will provide clarification as to the appropriateness of different types of research in various areas in the park.

New Direction

➢ **Cooperate with the Clayoquot Sound Central Region Board and others in the designation and implementation of the Biosphere Reserve and integration of those parts of Strathcona Park into the Biosphere program.**

Public Feedback

Many people are supportive of the Biosphere concept and designation of parts of Strathcona Park. Some expressed concerns on the potential overuse of sensitive areas for research.

Rationale

- The biosphere designation complements the park and its vision statement, and increases the conservation profile of the park.
- It may assist in providing for sensitive management practices on adjacent lands.

Long-term Protection of Sensitive Species

Strathcona Park protects a number of rare and endangered species. As land use outside the boundaries change the structure and functioning of ecosystems, the park will become increasing important in conserving not only rare and endangered species, but also representative natural ecosystems.

At one time, Strathcona Park had a significant population of the Vancouver Island Marmot, which is now an extremely endangered mammal. To prevent extinction, the provincial government has established the Marmot Recovery Team of which BC Parks is a member. Recently the Team has initiated a captive-breeding program to assist the population. Mt. Washington, next to the park, has been suggested as a location for a breeding facility. The Team proposes to reintroduce marmots to three locations which have had historic populations. The best location in the park is in the Wilderness Conservation Zone.

Direction in the Master Plan

Maintain and protect natural diversity of wildlife with special attention to sensitive, rare, threatened and endangered animals (p. 27).
Marmots were not specifically addressed.

Additional Direction

➢ **Ensure that the recreation use and supporting development does not impact sensitive species or reduce representative ecosystems.**

Public Feedback

Many participants were supportive of the park's role in protecting natural ecosystems and its plants and animals.

Rationale

- Strathcona Park protects a number of rare and endangered species and conserves representative ecosystems.

- This direction is in keeping with the master plan and with the vision to protect rare, endangered species and representative ecosystems and is consistent BC Parks' impact assessment policy.

Additional Direction

- ➢ **Support the government initiative to re-introduce the Vancouver Island Marmot and work closely with researchers to limit the impact of re-introduction activities on the wilderness values of the park.**

Public Feedback

At many of the sessions, there was support for re-introducing marmots to Strathcona Park. Concern was expressed about the negative impacts on wilderness recreation and the success of the program versus its cost.

Rationale

- The park could play a significant role in the recovery of the rare Vancouver Island Marmot, although there may be some impact to the wilderness values with helicopter flights and some infrastructure requirements.
- This direction supports a provincial initiative (Vancouver Island Marmot Recovery Team) to protect the Vancouver Island Marmot from extinction.
- Supporting the marmot recovery program is in keeping with the vision statement to maintain and protect rare and endangered species.

Hunting and Trapping

Hunting and trapping are controversial activities in parks. They are allowed in some parks but not in others. The original portions of Strathcona Park were closed to hunting in 1911. In 1993, McBride Creek and the Megin River and Talbot Creek were added to the park. These areas have two existing guide outfitter territories. A number of traplines also exist in Strathcona Park, but the 1993 master plan indicated that trapping was not an appropriate use in the park. First Nations have aboriginal rights to undertake traditional activities, such as hunting and trapping in protected areas.

Direction in the Master Plan

The park is closed to hunting and trapping (p. 28).

Additional Direction

- ➢ **Permit existing hunting in the Wilderness Recreation zones of Megin River and Talbot Creek addition.**
- ➢ **Respect the right of First Nations to hunt in the park. Work with First Nations to redirect hunting away from areas where there are safety or conservation concerns.**
- ➢ **Keep the older part of the park closed to hunting.**
- ➢ **BC Parks will facilitate meetings between the Vancouver Island zone of the BC Wildlife Federation and the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee to identify areas of the park that may be compatible with hunting for consideration in future reviews of the management plan.**

Public Feedback There were comments from both sides of the debate. Guide outfitters and hunters still want to be able to hunt. Others believe that hunting and trapping is totally inappropriate for a park.

Rationale

- In the land use planning processes, government has indicated that it will honour existing uses that are compatible with the *Park Act*.
- Hunting is an existing use in the new additions to Strathcona Park and guide outfitters have a right to hunt in the park. Hunting is considered an acceptable recreation activity within some parks.
- Maintaining no hunting in the old part of the park, which has been closed since 1911 continues the direction of the last master plan.

New Direction

- **Permit registered traplines in the Megin Talbot and McBride Creek additions as a pre-existing use and purchase trapping territories if offered for sale by trapline holders.**
- **Respect the right of First Nations to trap in the park.**

Public Feedback Many people were not supportive of trapping in the park.

Rationale

- Trapping is an existing use in the new additions to Strathcona Park.
- Acquisition of traplines licenses follows the vision and master plan direction to protect the ecosystem of the park.
- Aboriginal people have the right to trap in the park.

Plate 6: Collared elk at Crest Creek

5.6 Cultural Resources (p. 30)

Little is known about the First Nation cultural sites in the park. Some sites have been flooded as a result of hydro electrical projects. First Nations are interested in researching the cultural sites in the park. Acquiring more information on archeological values would be a benefit to park management.

Additional Direction	➢ **Work with First Nations to undertake archeological studies in the park.**
Public Feedback	Participants supported gaining a better understanding of the values of the park. Some were concerned about environmental impacts in areas where research would be undertaken.
Rationale	• This approach assists in increasing the knowledge of the values within the park. • It is consistent with the vision statement to work with First Nations and increase knowledge of park values.

Plate 7: First Nation dancer

6. Visitors Services

6.2 Access Strategy (p. 36)

Road and Trail Access

There are three primary access points to Strathcona Park and include: Highway 28 which runs from Campbell River to Gold River; the Buttle Lake roadway which extends from Highway 28 at Buttle Narrows to the mine site in Strathcona Westmin Park; and the Strathcona Parkway which offers paved access from Courtenay to the Mt. Washington ski resort and Forbidden Plateau. Many secondary access points exist and serve areas like Oshinow and Kunlin lakes. They primarily serve logging operations near the park. These roads provide varying degrees of ease of access and are often dependent on adjacent harvesting activities and road deactivation plans. Access to the west and southwest sides of the park is particularly difficult.

As indicated above, adjacent timber harvesting can facilitate access to the park. This is a concern where increased access will have an impact on visitor experiences and the environment and where access is provided to a Wilderness Conservation Zone.

Direction in the Master Plan

Develop a new vehicle accessible campground at south end of Oshinow Lake and the north end of Donner Lake (p. 36)
Improve road access to Kunlin, Oshinow and Donner lakes (p. 50).

Revised Direction

- **Focus on improving access to the proposed campsites at Kunlin and Oshinow lakes. Provide trail access to Donner Lake. Continue to allow road access to Toy Lake.**
- **In conjunction with government agencies and forest companies, develop plans to maintain existing access where appropriate and control new access.**
- **Develop an inventory of informal access points and manage them to minimize impacts on the Wilderness Conservation Zone.**

Public Feedback

Some communities such as Port Alberni and Gold River wanted better road access to the park. Others were concerned about the traditional access points that are to be decommissioned as logging roads, or that are not maintained and are now impassable. Many were concerned about the detrimental affects of new access resulting from industrial development near the park boundaries.

Rationale

- Improved access to Kunlin and Oshinow lakes will complement the proposed campground developments.
- Trail access to Donner Lake will assist in maintaining wilderness qualities and complement the development of wilderness canoeing opportunity.
- Road access to Toy Lake allows for sportsfishing opportunities which is in keeping with the vision statement to provide recreation opportunities.

- This direction protects access for existing recreation activities, and protects the Wilderness Conservation Zone from increased use and impact resulting from improved access. This is consistent with the vision.
- Many informal routes exist, and need to be documented and controlled in order to protect the wilderness recreation values and natural values of the park.
- Access management is in keeping with the vision to minimize impact to the Wilderness Conservation zones through control of informal and/or secondary access points.

Air Access

Most of the park is closed to aircraft landings with the objective to minimize disturbance to the Wilderness Conservation Zone. Floatplanes are permitted to land on Buttle and Gold lakes. In the Megin Talbot addition, Megin Lake is typically accessed by floatplane.

Direction in the Master Plan

The park is closed to aircraft landings except for floatplane access to Gold Lake and Buttle Lake (p. 36).

Revised Direction

- **No aircraft landings in the wilderness core of the park, the Wilderness Conservation Zone, except in emergencies.**
- **Continue to allow landings on Buttle and Gold lakes and allow landings on Megin Lake, Great Central and Upper Campbell lakes.**

Public Feedback

This is a controversial topic. Some people wanted access for tourism and personal reasons; others wanted the park to be free of the noise and protect the wilderness experience for hikers.

Rationale

- In the Wilderness Conservation Zone, air access is closed to maintain values and avoid adverse degradation. This reaffirms the zoning.
- Lack of access can serve to maintain values, particularly in sensitive areas.
- The central portion of the park will continue to be free from aircraft landings, which is in keeping with the vision statement.
- Access to lakes outside the Wilderness Conservation Zone allows for visitors to enjoy the park, which is in keeping with the vision statement.

Additional Direction

- **Request that aircraft operators minimize flights over Wilderness Conservation zones.**
- **Provide Transport Canada with park boundary information to ensure parks are shown on aviation maps.**

Public Feedback People supported reduction of flights over the park but also recognized that commercial traffic from Vancouver and Victoria airports fly over the park. Good information is key to gaining cooperation of the pilots.

Rationale

- Working to minimize flights over the park will assist in maintaining the wilderness experience, which is consistent with the vision statement.
- Park boundaries on the aviation maps can increase the awareness of all pilots on the location of protected areas.

Plate 8: Elk Portal entrance to Strathcona Park

6.3 Information Strategy (p. 37)

Information and education can influence the visitors' expectations and improve the quality of their visit. It can also serve to protect park values by providing guidance on responsible use and minimizing impacts.

One of the major ways of distributing information to the public is through a visitor centre. Strathcona Park, one of the flagship parks of the BC Parks system, lacks a visitor centre. A public volunteer group has investigated developing a visitor centre in the Paradise Meadows area that would function as both a warming facility and a means of information dispersal. Such a development would be dependent on an appropriate location, a full impact assessment, funds for construction and ongoing maintenance, and public support.

Direction in the Master Plan

- Develop a communication plan to include the full spectrum of facilities, signs and interpretative strategies (p. 37).
- Develop a new park headquarter facility at Buttle Narrows to provide improved visitor services (p. 40).
- Construct a warming hut at Paradise Meadows to serve as a summer facility for the distribution of information to the public (p.40).

Confirmed Direction

- **Continue to follow the direction of the master plan to work with community groups to provide information and education on responsible use.**
- **Continue with the master plan direction to develop a communication plan to address the distribution of information and educational materials, interpretive and information signs, interpretive strategies, and visitor program themes.**
- **Investigate opportunities to provide information at park entrance.**

Public Feedback

People were concerned about the lack of educational and interpretive opportunities in the park and the inability to inform visitors of appropriate use and behavior. Others were concerned about the dissemination of information. Many participants saw Strathcona Park is a major destination and an important protected area on Vancouver Island. Therefore they felt that the park should have a visitors centre. Some suggested a visitor centre in Courtenay to reach more people and others recommended Campbell River, Buttle Lake and Forbidden Plateau as appropriate locations.

Rationale

- A communication plan will assist in providing relevant information.
- A communication plan will protect park values by: providing guidance on responsible use and minimizing impacts; clarifying and enhancing the visitors' expectations and quality of their visit; building an appreciation and understanding for the park and its natural and cultural values; increasing public awareness of the park and its role in achieving the goals of the protected areas system; and instilling a sense of stewardship for the parks and the protected areas system.

- There has been strong support for a visitor centre since the 1993 master plan and a communication plan will assist in assessing the type and location of facilities to distribute visitor information while providing local groups with guidance in achieving this objective.
- Since the 1993 Master Plan, there have been a number of changes to the private provision of nordic ski facilities. The need for a warming hut in the area where winter recreation is focused must be evaluated in light of these changes.
- These directions are in keeping with the vision statement and the direction set by the master plan.

Plate 9: Della Falls

6.5 Management Services (pp. 39 – 40)

Over the last five years, the number of parks has increased while budgets have remained static and have been redistributed to meet a growing park system. This has led to reduced funds for the development of new facilities and maintenance of existing parks. The Legacy Panel, established by government to provide advice on the planning and management of protected areas, made recommendations regarding funding which the government is now examining. Implementing the full array of actions listed in a master plan is very difficult with low levels of resources.

Direction in the Master Plan

Greater staff presence will be encouraged in order to meet the objectives of the plan (p. 40).

Revised Direction

- **Work to ensure responsible management of the park and the implementation of the master plan in a timely manner.**

Public Feedback

Participants expressed frustration in the slow implementation of the master plan. Overall people were very supportive of providing adequate resources in terms of finance and staffing to ensure appropriate and responsible management of the park. Some people supported user fees as a means of generating revenue while others rejected user fees.

Rationale

- The issue of budget and staffing is beyond the scope of the master plan but essential to its implementation.

Confirmed Direction

- **Continue working with the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee.**

Public Feedback

The public supported SPPAC as an advisory group to BC Parks to assist in park planning and management.

Rationale

- The committee assists in the implementation of the master plan and provides advice on annual operating plans, permit applications, public issues and concerns, and issues referred by the District Manager.
- SPPAC provides a venue for feedback on park operations, policy and management.

Volunteers

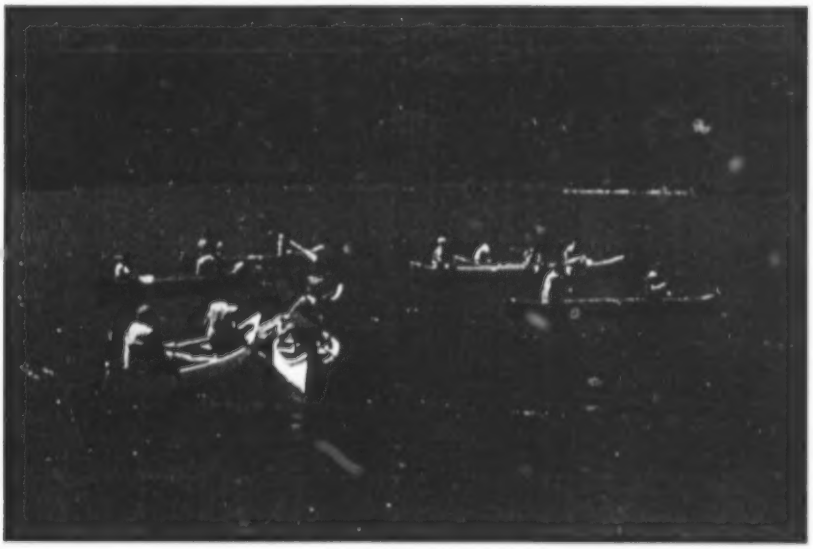
Volunteers provide an excellent means of actively engaging people in the stewardship of parks. Strathcona Park has benefited from numerous volunteer efforts including trail hosts, campground hosts, adopt-a-trail program, trail maintenance crews and the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee.

Direction in the Master Plan

- Establish a Strathcona Park public advisory committee (p. 39).
- Liaise with hiking and other groups to ensure that park management concerns benefit from the great possible input (p. 39).
- Encourage volunteers (p. 40).

Additional Direction	➢ **Work with groups and local communities in the delivery of park programs and development of facilities.** ➢ **Engage people who are interested in voluntary activities without displacing staff.**
Public Feedback	People wanted opportunities for volunteers to assist in the stewardship of the park but not at the expense of reducing staff.
Rationale	• Volunteers provide a means of actively engaging people in the stewardship of parks, for the benefit of the park. • This direction further involves the public in the park, and is in keeping with the vision statement.

Plate 10: Canoeing on Buttle Lake



6.6 Outdoor Recreation Opportunities (p. 40)

Strathcona Park has a long history of recreation use and continues to be a popular destination. Recreation activities in the park have changed over time and will continue to change in the future. Two factors can affect the conservation and recreation values of the park - type of use and level of use. A high level of use can negatively impact the natural values and the wilderness experience of the visitors. Park visitation has increased over time and is expected to continue to increase in the future.

Direction in the Master Plan

- The plan outlines a wide variety of activities that are appropriate for Strathcona Park including angling, boating, frontcountry camping, backcountry hiking, mountaineering, horse use, winter recreation, resource appreciation and day use (pp. 40-50).
- Develop a range of hiking opportunities and related facilities that minimize impact on the environment and conflicts between other users (p. 43).
- The plan is silent on the existing cabins and direction for management.

Additional Direction

➢ **Develop recreation plan(s) for the park to manage backcountry recreation and possibly provide more opportunities while protecting the park's natural values. Ensure that facility development is balanced with the natural and wilderness values.**

Public Feedback

The provision of a variety of recreation opportunities is important to all the communities surrounding the park. Recreation should be balanced with protection of the natural values. People have asked for more cross-country skiing and hiking opportunities.

Rationale

- Strathcona Park has been and continues to be a popular destination. Use can negatively impact the natural values and the experience of the visitors.
- A recreation plan will evaluate the recreation experience and types and levels of use that the environment can sustain. It will also achieve the balance between recreational use and protection of the environment, which is consistent with the vision statement.

Additional Direction

➢ **Place priority on maintenance of existing infrastructure, until increased use and/or available funds make it feasible to expand the facilities.**

Public Feedback

Many people expressed concerns with the current condition of trails. People suggested that current trails maintained before new ones are built.

Rationale

- Construction of new facilities such as trails and campsites may be considered as eroding the remaining 'wilderness' in the Wilderness Recreation Zone.
- There is a lack of staff and funding to maintain new facilities and trails.

6.6.2 Boating (p. 41)

Motor boating is a popular recreational activity in the park. It may be considered an appropriate activity in the more developed portions of the park, rather than the wilderness core of the park.

Direction in the Master Plan

Restrict motor boating to Buttle Lake (p. 41).

Additional Direction

- **Allow full range of motor boating in only Buttle, Upper Campbell, and Great Central lakes. Allow fish trolling opportunities in keeping with the wilderness character in Oshinow Lake.**
- **Apply appropriate power/speed restrictions to provide safety, noise and environmental conditions that are consistent with a wilderness setting.**

Public Feedback

Some people wanted opportunities to boat in Strathcona Park. Concerns were raised about personal watercraft at Buttle Narrows because of excessive noise created by these boats and its impact on the wilderness experience.

Rationale

- Motor boating is considered an appropriate activity in the more developed portions of the park, but not the wilderness core of the park.
- Motor boating for the purposes of trolling will complement the proposed vehicle-accessed campground development at Oshinow Lake and maintain the wilderness qualities of the setting.
- The head of Great Central Lake was recently added to the park. Motor boats provide access to the Della Falls trailhead.
- Motor boating serves to increase recreational activities for a number of surrounding communities, thus is consistent with the vision statement.

6.6.3 Frontcountry Camping (p. 41)

Camping in established drive-in campgrounds is a popular recreational activity in British Columbia and on Vancouver Island. Resource dependent communities want tourism opportunities and attractions to diversify their economies. BC Parks campgrounds are seen as a means of assisting the transition from resource dependency to increased tourism.

Direction in the Master Plan

Develop new vehicle accessible campgrounds at the south end of Oshinow Lake and the north end of Donner Lake with a canoe accessible campground at the south end of Donner Lake (pp. 36, 41).

Revised Directions

- **Develop a campground and day use area at Kunlin Lake, with trail access and primitive canoe camping sites on Donner Lake, subject to an environmental impact assessment and First Nation consultation.**
- **Develop a campground at Oshinow Lake, as directed by the master plan, subject to an environmental impact assessment and First Nation consultation.**

Public Feedback

Communities are frustrated by the lack of development recommended in the 1993 plan and the lack of access that communities such as Port Alberni and Gold River have to the park. People were supportive of a campsite development at Kunlin Lake. Some were opposed to a large campground development at Oshinow Lake given the potential impacts to the wilderness experience and natural environment beyond the site.

Rationale

- Frontcountry camping is a popular activity in British Columbia.
- Locating the campsite at Kunlin Lake instead of Donner Lake reduces the cost of road construction.
- A wilderness campsite on Donner Lake provides a unique canoeing opportunity.
- These directions are keeping with the direction of the existing master plan and the vision statement to expand recreational opportunities.

6.6.4 Backcountry Hiking (pp. 42-44)

Backcountry hiking and backpacking are long-standing and popular activities in Strathcona Park. Increasingly, ecotourism operators are looking to provincial parks for high quality experiences for their customers.

Recreational activity in the backcountry can have a detrimental impact on park values. When use is heavy, BC Parks must either limit use or provide facilities such as pit toilets and formalized campsites to accommodate use and lessen the impact. Given that BC Parks cannot respond to specific areas of impact by developing facilities in Wilderness Conservation zones, the level of use will have to be restricted.

Direction in the Master Plan

- Ensure no park development within the Wilderness Conservation zones (p. 43).
- Develop indicators to measure user impacts and determine means to control user numbers accordingly (p. 43).
- Develop a backcountry management plan for the park (p. 43).
- Complete trail for Margaret Lake to Oshinow from Margaret Creek to Della Falls, from Oshinow Lake to Della Falls (p. 43).
  Designate backcountry campsites at Cream Lake, Margaret Lake, Donner Lake, Marble Meadows, Drinkwater Creek, Douglas/Mackenzie Lakes, Circlet Lake, Kwai Lake, Bedwell Lake, Arnica Lake, Della Falls, Elk River, Gold Lake, Lake Helen Mackenzie (p. 43).

Revised Direction

➢ **With the exception of the trails connecting Oshinow, Margaret Lake and Della Falls, continue to follow the direction of the master plan by improving trails and the development of facilities, recognizing the limitations on budget and staff.**

Public Feedback

Participants were supportive of the existing master plan and its direction on trails and facilities, but were uncertain about the trail connecting Oshinow, Margaret Lake and Della Falls.

Rationale

- This direction assists in reducing environmental impacts and maintaining a diversity of recreation opportunities, and therefore is in keeping with the vision statement.
- This approach eliminates the development of a trail system that would have a large impact on the environment and be costly to maintain.

Additional Direction

- **Monitor sensitive areas and areas of high use in conjunction with partners such as hiking clubs, environmental groups, tourism operators and First Nations. When environmental impacts reach a pre-established threshold, take management action. Such action may include limiting numbers of visitors, restricting access and requiring registration and permits.**
- **Develop strategies to control levels of use in the Wilderness Conservation Zone.**
- **Work with ski resorts, school groups and others to control the level of use on Forbidden Plateau and reduce pedestrian impacts.**

Public Feedback

Many people raised a concern about impact of recreation use on the environment and on the experience of being in the backcountry. Some called for the upgrading and addition of trails. Others requested restrictions to limit the number of people entering the backcountry.

Rationale

- This will address the impacts of recreation in the Wilderness Conservation Zone and other sensitive areas.
- This direction is consistent with the existing master plan and vision statement to provide recreational opportunities at sustainable levels, without compromising the conservation values and objectives.
- It also assists in providing information and guidance of appropriate use and enhances quality of visitors' experiences.

Additional Direction

- **Investigate opportunities to develop a loop trail to BC Parks standards connecting Bedwell Lake to Cream Lake and Price Creek.**

Public Feedback

Some people wanted to see this informal route upgraded.

Rationale

- The use of the existing rough trail is having impacts on the environment. Steps must be taken to either formalize or close the route.
- This action will address the vision statement to protect the environment while offering recreational opportunities.

Additional Direction

- **Maintain Wheaton Hut, Sid's cabin, the Douglas Lake cabin, and the Divers Lake cabin for public use. Explore partnerships to maintain and /or improve the cabins.**
- **As outlined in the 1993 master plan, construct a cabin at Circlet Lake for overnight use by groups of skiers and hikers.**
- **Maintain rustic roofed accommodation on Megin Lake that supports fishers and canoeists.**

Public Feedback People supported the existing cabins in the park and the direction in the current master plan for construction of a cabin at Circlet Lake.

Rationale

- Cabins can assist in confining and reducing environment impacts is areas of high use.
- These directions are consistent with past management practices in the park.
- Cabins can increase the diversity of recreation opportunities, as outlined in the vision statement.

6.6.6 Horse Use (p. 45)

Horse use is allowed in many parks but is managed carefully to ensure that there is minimal impact on the environment or conflicts with other users. Horse use is inappropriate for most of Strathcona Park because of the steep terrain, wet soils, and sensitive plant communities.

Direction in the Master Plan

- Permit horse use of the logging road to the west of Gold Lake, and on the section of the old logging road near Kunlin Lake (p. 45).
- Study the potential of horse use at Kunlin, Donner and Oshinow lakes (p. 45).

Revised Direction

- **Continue to allow horse use in the Kunlin area north of the Ucona River.**
- **Allow horse use northwest of Donner Lake and at Oshinow Lake for a two-year test period, while implementing a monitoring system in conjunction with horse users to assess impacts.**

Public Feedback People were looking for opportunities to allow horse use in the park and others were concerned about the impact on the environment. Some frustration was expressed at the lack of progress on the study of potential horse use.

Rationale

- This use is consistent with intent of master plan.
- Keeping horses on the north side of Ucona River will limit conflicts with elk herds.
- This direction increases the recreation opportunities at the periphery of park, which is in keeping with the vision statement.

6.6.7 Mountain Biking (p. 46)

Currently, mountain bikes are not permitted in the park. The trails in the park were built for pedestrians and for the most part are too steep, narrow or wet to support bike use.

Direction in the Master Plan

- Continue with a park-wide ban on mountain bikes off-road (p. 46).
- Undertake a feasibility study to determine if there are areas within the park that can accommodate mountain bikes (p. 46).

Revised Direction

- **Designate the following areas for mountain bike use: the gravel roads in the Kunlin/Donner lakes (north of the Ucona River) and the Oshinow lake areas; along any power lines with road access; and on existing roads used by vehicles.**
- **Continue with the direction to undertake a feasibility study for connecting routes in the Kunlin/Donner lakes area in conjunction with local mountain biking clubs.**

Public Feedback

People expressed a desire for mountain bike opportunities in the park. Others were concerned about the impact on the trails and the environment, as well as the hikers' experience and safety.

Rationale

- Much of the terrain of Strathcona Park is steep and not well suited to mountain bike use.
- Bikes can have significant impacts on trails, resulting in increased maintenance.
- Keeping bikes on the north side of the Ucona River will limit conflicts with elk herds and studying connecting routes will enhance the recreation experience while minimizing impacts to park values.
- Permitting mountain bike on old logging roads would increase the diversity of recreational opportunities, which is in keeping with the vision statement.

6.6.8 Winter Recreation (p. 47)

Forbidden Plateau is an increasingly popular cross country skiing area. Addition of the Divers Rossiter area to the park could increase opportunities.

The use of snowmobiles and other related motorized snow machines have not been permitted in Strathcona Park. A number of clubs and individuals use the area outside the park, including Divers Rossiter lakes prior to it being designated as a park. Now that this area is being added to the park, snowmobilers have expressed concern about loss of opportunity.

Direction in the Master Plan

- Keep park closed to snowmobiling (p. 47).
- Limit track-set cross-country ski trails to current area (p. 47).

Confirmed Direction

- ➢ **Snowmobiling is not an appropriate activity in Strathcona Park.**
- ➢ **BC Parks will facilitate meetings between snowmobile clubs and the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee to identify areas along the periphery of the park that may be compatible with snowmobile use for consideration in future reviews of the management plan.**

Public Feedback

Many of the park supporters feel that in order to provide a quiet wilderness experience in the backcountry area, Strathcona Park should be not be accessed by motorized vehicles. Others want to continue to snowmobile in the Divers Lake area and would like the opportunity to snowmobile in the Forbidden Plateau area.

Rationale

- Although the Diver/Rossiter lakes area has been used by snowmobilers in the past, it is not a key snowmobile area. The area is small and does not serve as a connector route.
- Snowmobiling on lakes may cause water pollution; air quality is also a concern.
- BC Parks staff is not able to patrol or monitor areas of winter use due to lack of staff and resources.
- Motorized activities, such as snowmobiling are not in keeping with the wilderness setting of the park as set out in the vision statement.

Revised Direction

- ➢ **Allow for the packing of connecting loops in existing ski trail area. Except for access to the current trails through the Divers Rossiter addition, no new track will be cut in park.**

Public Feedback

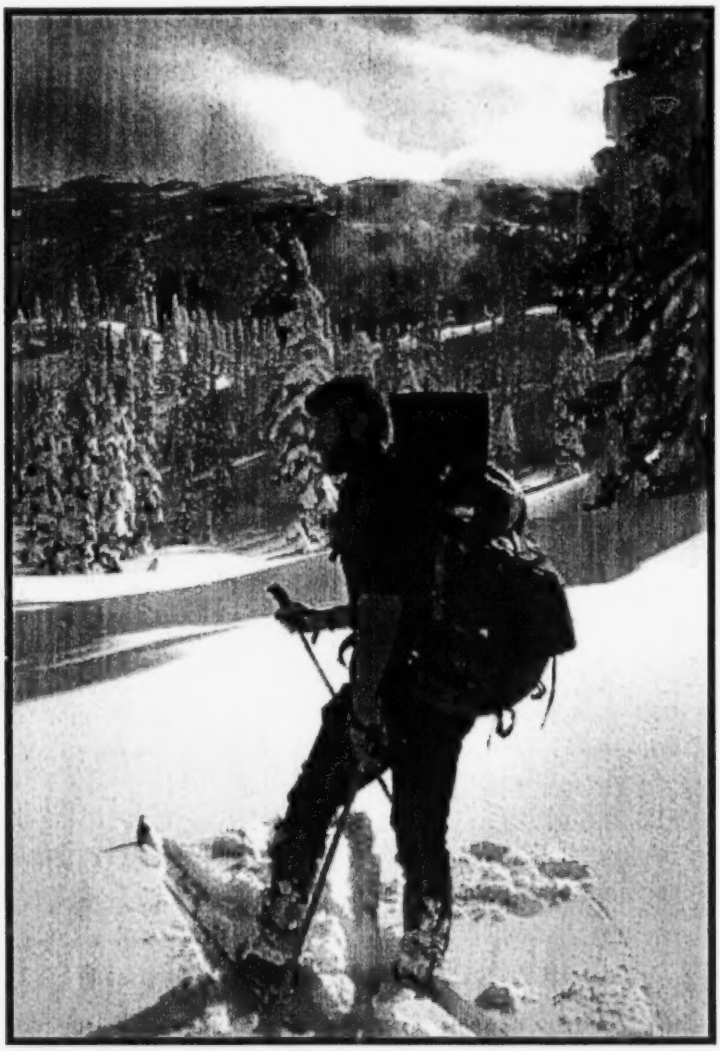
Some park supporters would like to see an expansion of the track set area for cross country skiing. Others do not support the removal of more trees or the expanded use of the mechanized track setters.

Rationale

- Closer in loops would provide alternative and additional cross country opportunities.
- Given that these trails would be developed on previously impacted areas or roads and that no additional trees would be removed other than a small area in the new addition, there is be minimal impacts.

- This direction is in keeping with the vision statement to increase opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Plate 11: Backcountry skiing on Forbidden Plateau



6.6.12 Day Use Opportunities (p. 50)

Many park users are visiting for the day, by driving the roads in the park, fishing, boating or hiking. Much of their activity is focused in the Intensive Recreation Zone along Highway 28 or the road to the Boliden mine, or in the Natural Environment Zone on Forbidden Plateau. Often people go hiking with their dogs. Uncontrolled dogs on Forbidden Plateau have become an issue.

Direction in the Master Plan

- To facilitate day users of the park (p. 50)
- To expand day-use opportunities.

Confirmed Direction

➢ **Investigate options to provide day use recreation opportunities while minimizing impact in the Intensive Recreation zones.**

Public Feedback

Many people were looking for more opportunities to enjoy the park.

Rationale

- This will assist in providing a diversity of recreation experiences as outlined in the vision statement.

Additional Direction

➢ **Address enforcement of the regulation requiring that pets be on leash in Strathcona Park. If non-compliance remains an issue, prohibit pets from all areas except in the Intensive Recreation Zone.**

Public Feedback

Many people were concerned about dogs running off leash and out of control, with detrimental impacts to the environment, wildlife and other recreationists. Others prefer to enjoy the park with their dogs.

Rationale

- Dogs and other pets can have an impact if they are not under control, such as chasing wildlife, defecation in surface water or digging in the sensitive high elevation environment. Pets are required by regulation to be on a leash to ensure that they stay under control. Unfortunately, not all dog owners follow this legal requirement.
- Enforcement of this regulation minimizes the impacts on water quality, wildlife and other recreational users while maintaining the opportunity to hike with a pet.
- This direction is in keeping with the vision statement.

Additional Direction

➢ **Investigate opportunities to develop pullouts along the park roadways at points of scenic interest.**

Public Feedback

Some participants expressed frustration at not being able to pull off the highway to enjoy the park scenery.

Rationale

- This will allow the traveling public to view the park in a safe manner.
- It adds to the day use opportunities, which is in keeping with the vision statement.

6.6.13 Sport Climbing (new section)

Rock climbing has been increasing in popularity. The Crest Creek Crags area, north and south of Highway 28, is a popular site for technical climbing and is in the Intensive Recreation Zone. Local groups have been active in developing and promoting this activity. Clearing routes of vegetation is of particular concern as rocky outcrops and seepage areas tend to support rare and endangered plant species.

Direction in the Master Plan

The master plan is silent on this activity.

New Direction

- **To provide climbing opportunities in the Intensive Recreation Zone, subject to an approved development plan. This plan would include an impact assessment of current and future routes to ensure that rare and endangered species are not impacted.**
- **Allow unaided (i.e. no permanent installations) climbing in other parts of the park.**

Public Feedback

Some people indicated a desire for expanded rock climbing opportunities and support facilities. Others expressed a concern for environmental impacts.

Rationale

- Often rare and endangered plants grow on rocky outcrops and seepage areas, and may be at risk in the development of climbing routes.
- This new direction provides for the protection of rare and endangered plants and their habitats while permitting recreational use. This is in keeping with the vision statement.

New Direction

- **Formalize the trails to the Crest Creek Crags climbing areas in conjunction with local climbing groups.**
- **Work with local climbing groups to manage the climbing and development of facilities at Crest Creek Crags to serve climbers.**

Public Feedback

Local groups appreciated the opportunity to work with BC Parks to develop climbing opportunities. Some people expressed a concern that there was a potential for over development or substandard development.

Rationale

- The trails need to be upgraded to provide a safe recreational experience that minimizes impact on the natural environment.
- This new direction will assist in developing facilities to meet the users' needs.
- It also includes people in the planning and management of the park, which is consistent with the vision statement.

New Direction

- **Investigate the opportunity to develop a vehicle-accessed group campsite for climbers near Crest Lake, subject to an environmental impact assessment and First Nation consultation.**

Public Feedback Climbers and others supported the development of a camping area to serve the climbing community and other travelers.

Rationale

- A campsite will improve recreational experience, which is consistent with the vision statement, while limiting impacts from unplanned camping.

New Direction

➢ **Install signs at Crest Creek Crags to provide safety and directional information.**

Public Feedback Some participants wanted to see more information to guide park visitors.

Rationale

- Signs will assist in providing a safe hiking experience and reduce the impacts on the environment.

Plate 12: Mountaineering near Red Pillar